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ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

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INDEPENDENT

May 10, 2001

The Honorable Dan Burton  
Chairman  
House Committee on Government Reform  
2157 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Burton:

As you may know, there have been several recent media reports regarding the use of Administration resources to assist Republican campaigns. For example, an April 10, 2001, article in the *Wall Street Journal* stated that the President's "top political advisors have a detailed plan to use 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue as a staging ground" to help "vulnerable" Republican legislators, and that this plan includes having such members "dropping by" the White House to generate attention in their local media.<sup>1</sup> A May 1, 2001, *Washington Post* article reported that "Republican fundraisers are moving aggressively to capitalize on the party's control of the federal government, deploying President Bush to collect checks for the party and its candidates, making Cabinet secretaries available to brief big givers and offering \$10,000 donors the chance to mingle with diplomats at 'one of the Washington's famous embassies.'"<sup>2</sup> In addition, an April 3, 2001, *New York Times* article reported that, according to a close advisor to the President, the Republican committee was "being run out of the White House. The R.N.C. is a bank."<sup>3</sup>

Further, this past weekend, the *Washington Post* editorialized:

What caught our attention at the 100-day mark . . . wasn't so much a matter of tone as of smell: the smell – you might even call it stink – of buying and selling access. . . . [S]hould we be happy that the president, instead of renting out his residence, is renting out his

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<sup>1</sup>*Bush Team Has Picture-Perfect Plan to Help House GOP*, Wall Street Journal (Apr. 10, 2001).

<sup>2</sup>*Holding Reins of Power Helps GOP Boost Its Fundraising*, Washington Post (May 1, 2001).

<sup>3</sup>*A New Approach*, New York Times (Apr. 3, 2001).

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Cabinet officers? Later this month, couples who donate at least \$15,000 to a Republican campaign committee will be invited to a 'private reception' and photo opportunity with Commerce Secretary Don Evans. Big donors are promised briefings from Tommy Thompson, secretary of health and human services, and from Education Secretary Rod Paige and Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham. . . . The fact that the Bush administration, even before most of its officials are nominated or confirmed, feels the need to begin a corrupting and humiliating money chase reflects the dominance that campaign finance has achieved in official life.<sup>4</sup>

I am writing to ask whether you intend to conduct a Committee inquiry into the Bush Administration's campaign-related practices. The Bush Administration practices described in these recent reports appear similar to alleged Clinton Administration activities that you vigorously investigated in the last two Congresses.

At the outset of your investigation of campaign finance allegations relating to the Clinton Administration, you stated that you would "look into every area where there's a possibility of illegal activity as far as influence-peddling, illegal contributions, possible involvement of White House personnel and things like that."<sup>5</sup> You repeatedly reiterated that the investigation would look not only at "possible violations of law" but also more broadly at "political fundraising improprieties."<sup>6</sup>

Soon after the investigation began, you issued a broad subpoena to the White House that requested numerous items concerning the use of Administration resources for campaign matters, including:

- All records relating to the Democratic National Committee;
- All cellular phone records, phone credit card records, and any charges billed to the Democratic National Committee;
- All records of the White House social secretaries regarding scheduling of White House events, including "ceremonies, residence visits, overnight stays at the White House, Kennedy Center tickets, Camp David visits, private dinners, guests at White House movie showings, and official delegation trips abroad";

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<sup>4</sup>*A Familiar Odor*, Washington Post (May 6, 2001).

<sup>5</sup>Meet the Press (Feb. 16, 1997).

<sup>6</sup>See, e.g., Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, *Protocol for Documents* (June 23, 1998); H.Res. 167, 105<sup>th</sup> Cong. (providing special investigative authorities for the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight).

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- All records of attendees at White House movies;
- All records of guests at Camp David;
- All records of attendees at Presidential radio address spots; and
- All records relating to the President and/or Vice President and fundraising, among many other items.

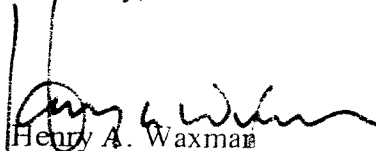
In addition, your wide-ranging subpoenas to the Democratic National Committee included requests for:

- All guest lists for events the President, First Lady, and/or Vice President were scheduled to attend or attended;
- All records relating to "any contacts and/or communications" between the DNC finance division staff and the White House; and
- All records relating to the Departments of Commerce, Justice, Housing and Urban Development, Energy, the National Security Council, and the Export-Import Bank.

As these and other subpoenas demonstrate, you demanded from the Clinton White House and Democratic National Committee detailed information relating to whether Clinton Administration resources were used inappropriately for campaign-related purposes, and whether Clinton Administration communications with the Democratic National Committee were inappropriate. Particularly in light of the reports that the Bush Administration is planning to or is already using White House and agency resources to support Republican candidacies and the Republican National Committee, I am curious about your interest in conducting oversight of such activities in the current Administration.

Please let me know whether you intend to obtain information from the current White House and Republican National Committee on these matters.

Sincerely,

  
Henry A. Waxman  
Ranking Minority Member

cc: Members of the Committee on Government Reform